

AUGB-DePauw Psychology Visit: Fall 2018 Report

The week of October 14th I visited the AUBG campus and met with members of the AUBG community for the purposes of reviewing the psychology program. I met with all members of the philosophy and psychology department including Diego Lucci (Department Chair), Ronald Harvey (Assistant Professor), Felix Diaz (Associate Professor), Steven Sullivan (President of AUBG), Robert White (Dean of Faculty), Emilia Zankina (Provost), Nikolina Ivanova-Bell (Library Director), over 20 students in the Psychology Club, and various other students and administrative staff. I also attended a presentation of the psychology major for AUBG students made by the department, met with the department in their monthly departmental meeting and observed two classes, one by Prof. Diaz (Introduction to Social Psychology) and one by Prof. Harvey (Research Methods).

The Psychology Major is the newest major to be offered by AUBG and was started this Fall '18 semester. Demand for courses has been high—in fact, so high that two Introductory sections were added this first (Fall '18) semester.

Curriculum

Consistent with APA standards, the core curriculum in psychology consists of Introduction to Psychology (PSY 101), Introduction to Social Psychology (PSY 102), and Research Methods (PSY 200). In addition to Statistics (STA 105), these foundational courses are largely what represents core required courses in the psychology major at DePauw (Introduction to Psychology, and Statistics followed by Research Methods) and other similar institutions of higher education in the U.S. At AUBG, students are expected to complete both Statistics and Research Methods earlier in their undergraduate career (freshman and sophomore years) than at DePauw, where Research Methods is typically not completed by students until their junior year. I agree with the department's decision to offer Research Methods earlier rather than later in the student's undergraduate career at AUBG. Offering Research Methods earlier is better because the scientific foundation of psychology rests on the research methods psychologists employ. Exposing students to research design and requiring students to complete a research proposal encourages students to start thinking scientifically earlier and allows them to collaborate with AUBG faculty—not only in psychology but also in other disciplines such as business, journalism, and political science—and prepare students to do their own research in independent study or directed research, as well as in completing a thoughtfully designed empirical senior thesis.

The department also offers courses in Abnormal Psychology (PSY 202), Cognitive Psychology (PSY 303), Developmental Psychology (PSY 302), Personality Theory (PSY 203), Physiological Psychology (PSY 304), and the Psychology of Social Change (PSY 305) (Community Psychology) which rounds out the major content areas in the discipline as defined by APA standards. The department also cross-lists Topics in Politics: The Social Brain (POS 401) and Cross-Cultural Management and Corporate Culture (SES 360) and offers topics courses at the 300 and 400 level, a senior capstone and senior research thesis. Students may complete the senior thesis for an honors designation on their transcript, if they obtain a grade of B or better for the thesis.

When the Psychology Major will be accredited in Bulgaria, students completing the major with the honors designation would not be required to take Bulgarian state exam for certification.

Additionally, students may take courses that are cross-listed in other areas for credit toward the psychology major. Two courses that I would like to highlight are BUS 340 Organizational Theory and Behavior and BUS 361 Consumer Behavior. These two courses are typically offered either in the department of psychology or the business school at many American universities and prepare students for post-graduate study in Industrial/Organizational (I/O) Psychology. I/O is an area of psychology that has been growing in recent years and is expected to continue to grow substantially over the next 10 years as corporations increasingly are turning to psychology to measure and enhance not only job performance but also job satisfaction. According to the Bureau of Labor and Statistics in the US, the median *starting* salary for a master's in I/O psychology is \$56,794, with some sources citing median salaries at the Bachelor's level at 42,750 (\$58,429 with 5 years experience) (see:

<http://www.tuw.edu/content/psychology/industrial-organizational-psychology-salary-ranges/>).

Jobs that I/O psychologists hold include human resource management and marketing research and development, both of which are concentrations in the business department at AUBG. Offering these concentrations at a liberal arts college like AUBG is unusual and provides a particular advantage to AUBG students interested in pursuing training in I/O psychology at the Bachelor's level as well as further post-graduate study. In other words, AUBG's emphasis on business administration in conjunction with the psychology major should make students with a focus on I/O psychology *especially competitive* for jobs requiring a terminal B.A. as well as those applying for post-graduate study.

Given these curricular opportunities for students in business and psychology, it would certainly be possible to offer a concentration in I/O psychology at the bachelor's level. I would encourage AUBG to further explore this possibility as it could be rolled out and used as a *recruitment tool* for prospective students. Other possibilities could include a clinical/community psychology or counseling/community psychology concentration (which I completed in my undergraduate program), if a clinical or counseling psychologist with appropriate academic credentials could be hired in future.

Psychology dovetails nicely with many other disciplines at AUBG including philosophy, political science, economics, journalism, computer science, film studies, and others. Another way for the department to connect with students and faculty on campus is through interdisciplinary courses. An interdisciplinary course would be taught by both faculty in the psychology department and other departments (e.g., Journalism and Mass Communication (JMC), Political Science, Film Studies, Business, Economics). This interdisciplinary approach has already been used in European Studies with Economics, and JMC with Political Science.

One course that would be nice to have offered from time to time but is not on "the books" is Psychotherapy and Behavior Change. Although not necessary, it would complement the department's offering of Abnormal Psychology and be of particular interest to those students interested in clinical or counseling psychology. I understand that AUBG is in the process of

hiring a counseling psychologist and if this person also has the academic credentials, could offer this course taught on an adjunct basis.

Class Observations

As part of my visit, I was fortunate to observe two psychology classes. One was Introduction to Social Psychology (PSY 102) taught by Prof. Diaz and the other was Research Methods (PSY 200) taught by Prof. Harvey. I found both classes to be excellent. In Social Psychology, Prof. Diaz used a combination of an active learning exercise in the first half and interactive lecture for the second part. The active learning exercise focused on sources of socialization, especially in adolescence, where Prof. Diaz would reframe and elaborate on student's answers as these were given in class and kept track of these on the white board. There was a high level of student participation and involvement and I thought this activity and Prof. Diaz's implementation of it was highly effective. Prof. Diaz then shifted to the next section on sense of self and identity using the projector in an interactive lecture format. Prof. Diaz focused on the distinction between the self as it is known to us subjectively and the self as it is represented socially. Student participation was good and I thought that Prof. Diaz's presentation in this part of the class to incorporate somewhat profound views of this distinction. As a former psychology and philosophy major, I enjoyed this class very much and found it to be a highly effective AUBG class.

In addition, I also had the opportunity to visit Prof. Harvey's Research Methods class. Although I have not taught this particular course, the content for today's class focused on the experimental method (i.e., true experiments) which is an area that I cover to some degree in my Statistics and Intro courses. Prof. Harvey and I had earlier discussed how some key concepts (e.g., why random assignment allows for the inference of causation) can be rather difficult for students to grasp. In the class, Prof. Harvey employed interactive lecture using the projector to illustrate multiple examples of independent and dependent variables, true experiments, problems with studies which disqualify them as true experiments, and wrapping things up with threats to internal and external validity. Presentation was very clear and student participation and involvement was also high. Again, I enjoyed this class very much and found it to be a highly effective AUBG class.

Internships

At the department meeting, the members discussed how to implement internships into the psychology experience for majors. Students would be primarily responsible for finding internship placements, forming a mutually-agreed upon contract/agreement between the intern and internship site under the academic supervision of one of the department members. An on-going list of sites where students have completed internships will be kept by the department for future students interested in obtaining an internship. This approach to internship placement and supervision is consistent with my own experience as an undergraduate and is the typical practice in undergraduate institutions today.

Research

Conducting research at an undergraduate institution can be a challenge for both faculty and students. The psychology department offers opportunities for students to complete independent and original research through independent study and also the senior thesis. One possibility for facilitating student research in the major may be to establish a participant or subject pool in introductory courses (e.g., Introduction to Psychology, Introduction to Social Psychology). At larger academic institutions but also at other liberal arts colleges, students typically complete a research requirement in introductory psychology courses where they gain the experience of what it is like to be a subject in psychological research. At DePauw, we consider this requirement an opportunity for students to gain a further understanding of the scientific process involved in data collection, which is the basis for psychological knowledge. Since ethical participation in research must be voluntary, we offer alternative ways to obtain this research credit, including attending relevant speakers or reading short empirical studies published in *Psychological Science* where students complete a structured set of questions about each study. Depending on the research being conducted and need for research participants, students typically complete 3-4 hours per semester at DePauw, which is consistent with practices at similar institutions like Denison and Oberlin, as well as larger universities such as the University of Michigan, University of Minnesota, or Indiana University.

In lieu of or in addition to required credit, instructors may also offer extra credit for students in these courses for being subjects in psychological research. Although space for conducting laboratory studies is limited at AUBG, students may conduct field studies or surveys. A low-cost and efficient method of collecting survey data could be done online using a Google form. If funds are available, an online data collection service such as Survey Monkey is another option. If funds are available for paying participants, a crowdsourcing platform such as Mechanical Turk is another viable option.

Finally, another possibility is the use of existing archival databases. Increasingly, researchers are posting datasets online when they publish a study. Students might re-examine some subset of results, perhaps utilizing a different set of analyses or focusing on a subsample of the data.

Library Resources

I also examined the periodicals and databases for finding psychological resources (e.g., journal articles and books) in the library. The director of the library was very helpful in demonstrating that despite not having PsycINFO, a major database in psychology, AUBG students have essentially the same opportunities for finding and obtaining sources for course research. Using EBSCO as a search engine, using advanced settings students can find many of the same resources. In addition, because of consortiums like AMICAL, students have access to major periodicals in psychology including Journal of Personality, Journal of Personality Assessment, Personality and Individual Differences, Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, Journal of Community Psychology, Journal of Abnormal Psychology, Motivation and Emotion, Journal of Experimental Psychology, Cognitive Psychology, Political Psychology, and Research in Organizational Behavior, to name a few, with no additional cost to the university, students or faculty.

Evaluation

I believe that the psychology major is progressing nicely at AUBG. The structure of the major is highly consistent with what one would expect to see at a top liberal arts college in the U.S. Demand is high for these courses at AUBG, as evidenced by Prof. Diaz and Prof. Harvey both opening a *second section* of their respective Introductory level courses (Introduction to Social Psychology for Prof. Diaz; Introduction to Psychology for Prof. Harvey) in this first Fall semester of the psychology major. Additionally, Bulgarian accreditation for the major will be pursued over the next year and should provide student majors with a Bulgarian/EU certification. If high demand for these courses continues, it may be difficult for Prof. Diaz and Prof. Harvey to offer all of the courses required for a psychology major, additional faculty may be needed for the sustainability of a program that appears to have considerable interest on campus.

Respectfully Submitted,
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